

# COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY;

O R,

The true and solid grounds of pure  
and peaceable THEOLOGY.

*A subject very necessary, though hi-  
therto almost wholly neglected.*

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Proposed in an University-Discourse.

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And now Translated from the printed La-  
tin copy, with some few enlargements  
by the Author.

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*Gemmula grata magis, quàm magno pondere ferrum.*

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The Third Edition.

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The Publisher of the Original  
in *Latin*, to the Reader.

CHRISTIAN READER,

**T**Here be many who have  
written of Absolute  
Theology, and that oft-  
times to little purpose; but  
I have never heretofore met  
with any who have treated  
of Comparative Theology.

When by chance I happen-  
ed first to read this discourse,  
it did appear so excellent,  
the subject so necessary, and  
treated withal in that sa-  
ving way, which is not com-  
a mon,

mon, that I thought the making of it publick would be a good office done to all who aspire after solid knowledge in Christianity and divine things.

If you desire to know the Author, the dissertation itself does plainly shew, that he has for some time been the instructor of students in Theology in some University. To know more of him is not necessary, it may be, not expedient, while there are such heats among the several parties

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ties of Christians. In the meantime, it were to be wished, that those who have the charge of others, to instruct them in divine things, would season them with the like doctrine ; Then should we see Christian Churches and commonwealths, and every private person also, grow and advance daily in all good, and in peace and favour with God and man. Which may our infinitely good God grant : to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

*The Publisher of the Translation, to the Reader.*

**T**He wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable. How far the Christian world is at this day from these divine qualities, is but too visible. Men have so transformed the Christian doctrine by their glosses, that it is now hardly to be found among them in its truth and simplicity. The doctrine of Jesus Christ, as it is delivered unto us by his Apostles, is  
not

*To the Reader.*     vii

not now to be considered as the standard of Christianity, so much as the *Shorter and larger Catechisms*, the *Westminster Confession*, the *Trent Creed and Canons*, &c. In defence of which men relinquish and reject the true spirit and essence of Christianity, *the love of God, and their neighbours* ; and frame to themselves such a doctrine as will flatter their corrupt nature, and foster their pride and envy. In some nations it has been the great idol of differ-

ing families and tribes, to keep up their feuds and enmities among themselves, and to prosecute them to the last extremities in the mutual destruction of one another. Such a bloody and irreconcilable disposition, though it has been justly esteemed barbarous in them, is yet look'd upon to be a gracious and a holy zeal in the several tribes and parties of Christians, every one contending so earnestly, and disputing with such heat and concern, that they may maintain

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tain their own sect and set of opinions, in opposition to all others. And the generality of the respective spiritual heads and guides are so far from doing their duty in restraining these barbarities, that they will not hear of any principles or proposals that may tend this way; but if any thing be offered that may contribute to sweeten the minds of men toward one another, they make it their business to treat the proposers as common enemies, and

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to give such characters, both of them and of their sentiments, as may lead the people to abhor them.

The prejudices which the false representations of religion do to the true interest thereof, and to the souls of men, are innumerable : and how hurtful they are to societies and commonwealths, the present, as well as former ages, is a sufficient evidence. The factions in the State can never find fitter tools for carrying

rying on their designs, than those of the Church, who are ready to sacrifice both the liberties and wealth of their country, with the life of religion itself, to the little interests of their parties. So that we are all concerned, both as we are men, and as we are Christians, *in this our day to know the things that belong to our peace, before they be hid from our eyes.*

The following discourse

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was originally intended, by the Author, to form in the minds of those youth, whom he was to train up in Theological studies, such just and adequate notions of religion in all its parts, as might raise their concern for those things in it that are absolutely necessary and essential; and preserve them from a blind, ungovernable and furious zeal, for those other things, which are either merely circumstantial, or at least not necessary, nor of the  
essence

essence thereof, altho' they  
are now become the pillar and  
ground of most, if not of all  
the unhappy and unaccount-  
able contentions that are a-  
broad in the Christian world.  
And a written copy thereof  
falling into the hands of some  
persons, for whose judgment  
the Author has a great esteem,  
they obtained his permission  
to make it publick. Seeing  
some persons have been rea-  
dy, since the publication  
thereof, to give ill impressi-  
ons of it unto those who do  
essence not

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not understand the *Latin* tongue, it has been thought fit to publish it in *English*, that such might peruse it with their own, and not with other mens eyes. The few enlargements that have been made in this Translation are placed between crotchets [ ], so that they will be easily discerned by the Reader.

*That this discourse may, by the blessing of God, contribute to lead men to the true knowledge and love of*  
*God*

*To the Reader.*      **XV**

*God in Christ Jesus, and to mutual peace and charity with one another, is the earnest prayer both of the Author and Publisher.*

**The**

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# DISCOURSE

Concerning  
COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY.

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[The INTRODUCTION.

*The ground of the distinction of Theology into absolute and comparative. Both are described. Inconveniencies arising from the ignorance of comparative Theology. The heads of the following discourse.]*

§ 1.  **ALTHOUGH** all the parts of the Christian religion do agree in this, that they are revealed and enjoined by God; and also, that they are directed

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2 *Comparative Theology.*

rected to the glory of God and the salvation of men: yet they are not all of the same weight and importance; but being weighed in the balance of a sound judgment, some of them are found to be more weighty than others. The Prophets tell us, that *mercy, the knowledge of God, and obedience to his commands*, are more acceptable to him than *sacrifices and burnt-offerings*, 1 Sam. xv. 22. Hos. vi. 6. and our blessed Lord calls judgment, *mercy and truth*, compared with *tykes of mint, cummin and anise*, *ta sapientia vobis*, the more weighty things of the law, Matth. xxiii. 23. From this consideration

bounders

S. A

there

there ariseth a distinction or division of that *skill, knowledge and understanding*, which is conversant about religion, and which is commonly called *Theology*, or *Divinity*, into *absolute*, and *respective or comparative*. *Absolute Theology*, or that knowledge of religion which I call absolute, considers its object only as revealed and enjoined, or instituted by God; and its business is, to find out those things which are proposed to us in the Scriptures to be believed or practised, and to discern and distinguish them from all others. Again, *Comparative Theology*, or the respective knowledge of religion,

where

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ponders the weight or importance, and observes the order, respect and relation of things belonging to religion; whether they be points of doctrine, or precepts, or sacred rites; and teaches to distinguish and put a difference between the accessories of religion and the principals, the *circumstantials* and *substantials*, the *means* and their *ends*.

§ 2. In a preliminary discourse to our Divinity lectures of the last year, speaking of the differences about the Christian religion that are in the Christian Church, I touched this distinction by the by; and among the proper remedies of this evil,

evil, I mentioned the doctrine of *comparative Theology*. And indeed the oftner I reflect upon, and the more narrowly I consider this matter, I am the more convinced, and confirmed in my opinion, of the great usefulness and necessity of this doctrine. Nor do I much question, but you, *My Friends*, will be easily perswaded to be of my mind, when you shall perceive that the corrupt and dangerous state of the Christian Church at present is in a great degree owing to the want of this *comparative knowledge of religion*, or of a due regard had to it. For, that among all sects and parties of Christians,

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true piety is neglected, and divine charity and brotherly love are waxed cold; that they are cold and remiss in rooting out the lusts and depraved affections of corrupt nature, when in the meantime they lay themselves out with zeal and application for the propagating some opinions that be either obscure or uncertain, but no ways necessary, and for the suppressing others of the same nature which are not hurtful; that some religious rites and ceremonies are pertinaciously retained by some Christians, and as obstinately rejected by others; that they are at peace with vice and vicious persons,

fons, while they wage a cruel war with error and erring persons: these things are not so much to be imputed to the want of an *absolute knowledge* of religion, as of that which is *comparative*. No more can this be attributed to their being ignorant of any Christian precept, or of any absolute divine truth that is of any import to salvation: but it is because the generality of Christians either do not know, or will not consider how much *repentance, self-denial, mortifying of the flesh, charity, humility, &c.* are of more weight than *orthodoxy* or a *sound belief*, and *fraud* and *vice* more hateful than *error*;

## 2 *Comparative Theology*

the essential principles of religion excepted in both cases. Since then the use of *comparative Theology* is of so large extent, both for ordering the lives and manners of private Christians aright, and for settling the publick affairs which concern the peace of the Churches within themselves, and their mutual concord with one another; I presume, *Dear Fellow-students*, it will be a good office done to you, and nothing disagreeable to the rest of my hearers, if I shall furnish you with a key, by which you may enter into the most remote and intricate recesses of this so often commended Theology.

## Comparative Theology. 9

§ 3. That I may avoid rambling to and again without order or method in this discourse, I shall comprise what I have to say under three general heads. *First*, I shall give a rude draught and general idea of this *Theology*. *Secondly*, I shall descend to a more particular description of it. And in the *third* place, I shall lay down some conclusions or positions, which do naturally flow from this doctrine of *Comparative Theology*, and are worthy of your observation.

the rest of my matter, by which you may enter into the most remote and intricate recesses of this to once commended Theology.

A 5 I SECT.

## [ S E C T. I.

*Wherein Comparative Theology is handled in a general way. The state wherein man was created. Man's duty in that state. The reason of the prohibition concerning the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The fall of man occasioned the enlargement of religion. A general idea of this Theology.]*

§ 4. **A**S to the *First*, it is to be considered, that the *essence* of religion, or of the duty which man owes to God, or which God requires of man, in whatsoever state, whether that of integrity and innocence, or restorati-

*Comparative Theology.* II

on after the fall, or consummated felicity, doth solely consist in the LOVE OF GOD, as our Saviour teacheth us, *Matth. xxii. 22.* where he says, that the first and greatest commandment of the law is, to *love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength.* For God being self-sufficient, and independent of all other beings, did not in the least stand in need of the creatures and their service : but being determined by a most free, unconstrained and unnecessary act of his good pleasure, to take his delight with something without himself, he did

for that end, after the creation and fall of the angels, make man in his own image (that is, of a nature like his own) with whom he might live in friendship, and have all things in common; by offering himself, with all his glorious and amiable perfections to be deliciously enjoyed by man, and by receiving from him the grateful return of a reciprocal love and affection. And because man is a creature made up of a soul, a spiritual substance, and a body which is material; God created this visible and corporeal world, and furnished it with innumerable objects for the delighting the outward senses,

ses, and recreating those faculties which belong to the soul, as it is joined and united to the body; and made man lord over it: to this end, that as the soul had God, the infinite good, fitted and proportioned to its vast capacity, so the body also might not be without suitable and delightful objects. And to this design of God in the creation of the world the history thereof doth excellently agree: wherein we read that this whole visible world was at first created and finished, as a magnificent palace, richly provided with all kinds of furniture; and that after this, man, who was designed to be its

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lord and master, was made, and invested with the dominion of it.

§ 5. For so great favours, so liberally dispensed unto man, God required, or rather expected no other testimony of a grateful mind, but **LOVE**. And that his love might be noble and free, generous and unlimited, not necessitated, forced or restricted; it was the will of God, that man should be at his own disposal; and therefore he endowed him with a free power of determining the acts and exercises of his faculties to these or the other objects; of adhering to God by love, or departing from him;

him; and provided he still continued to love God, and to place his delight in him alone, nothing was forbidden him: all things were lawful unto him, and he was master of power most free (not only in a physical, but also in a moral sense) to dispose of all his faculties, and of the creatures subjected to him, at his pleasure, and that without any offence to God. As for the tree of knowledge of good and evil, concerning which the Scriptures inform us, that God charged *Adam* not to eat of it; this was not done out of envy, as if God had grudged him that pleasant fruit, (as he was slandered by

the devil) or intended in the least to diminish or infringe the full and free right and power which he had bestowed upon him, of using his faculties and all things under his command at his pleasure; without prejudice always of the love he owed to his Maker: but it is not improbable, that God having even then discovered in man some remote and dawning dispositions to the love of the creatures, did forbid him the use of one tree, either because his inclinations to it were greater than was fit, or that by this symbol, he might keep man mindful, that he held all the rest, whereof the free

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use was allowed to him, (by right of vassalage, only with a dependence upon God the Over-lord of all, to whom on that account he owed the greatest love.

§ 6. After that man had abused the liberty bestowed upon him, by transferring his love from God to the creatures, and had thereby violated the law of his creation, and the league of friendship that was contracted with God; and had also lost the love of God, and with it, the blessed presence and company of the Deity, who dwelt in his soul, and filled it with light, and joy, and peace; to which suc-

18. *Comparative Theology.*

ceeded darkness, anguish and disquiet: After, I say, that man had made defection from God, and God was determined to restore man, then did the confines of religion begin to be enlarged, and besides the *love of God*, which was lost, and still holds the principal place among the divine precepts and duties of religion, several other things were revealed, prescribed and instituted to be observed by man, as being some of them useful, and others necessary for recovering the *love of God* that was lost, and for bringing back man, that was gone astray, into the road of his duty.

§ 7. Out of what hath been already said, this succinct and general idea of the doctrine of Comparative Theology doth arise, viz. In the state of *nature's integrity and innocence*, the love of God made up the whole of religion; nor was there any other duty incumbent on man, but to love the Lord his God with all his heart. Again, in the state of *nature depraved*, and considered as it is to be repair'd and renewed, the same love of God still makes the first, the chief and capital part of religion, which alone is desired for itself, and for whose sake all the other things belonging to religion are enjoined:

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so that the love of God, being compared with the remaining parts of religion, is the end to which they all refer and lead as so many ways and means.

§ 8. For a more particular and distinct explication of this doctrine of Comparative Theology, thus summarily proposed, we are in the next place to shew how, and in what order, all the other precepts and instructions of religion do respect charity or the love of God, and serve for kindling up again

## [ S E C T. II.

*Wherein this Theology is more distinctly and particularly explained. A scheme of the Christian religion, shewing the weight and importance of all the parts thereof. Two particulars in it worthy of observation.]*

§ 8. **F**OR a more particular and distinct explication of this doctrine of *Comparative Theology*, thus summarily proposed, we are in the *next* place to shew how, and in what order, all the other precepts and institutions of religion do respect *charity* or the love of God, and serve for kindling up again

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again that heavenly flame in the hearts of men.

§ 9. First then, inasmuch as man had unworthily violated the league of friendship into which God had vouchsafed to admit him, and by transferring unto the creatures the love and affection that is due to God only, had drawn upon himself God's displeasure, and exposed himself unto eternal death; it was impossible that he could be restored unto his former state, without the grace and mercy of God pardoning his offence, on these terms, (and none more easy could be either desired or granted)

ed) viz. That man should return to his duty, that is, to the love of God; and that for this effect God should allow unto man a competent time, together with such helps as were necessary for that purpose.

§ 10. For obtaining of this mercy the *intercession* of a *mediator* was necessary; one who might procure this by his *merit* and *favour* with God. I shall not make it my business here to enquire into the causes and reasons why God would not be reconciled to fallen man, without the intervention of a mediator. That he would not, is evident from this, because for want of

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of a mediator the fallen angels were precluded from any access to the grace and favour of God. But the reason why the Son of God, passing by the fallen angels, undertook the cause of fallen man, seems to be partly the relation of the same common nature; *For he took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham, Heb. ii. 16.* and the vertue and efficacy of his incarnation, together with what he did and suffered in the flesh, began to take place immediately after man's fall, (whence our blessed Saviour is called *the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world, Rev. xiii. 8.*) partly because

cause the whole race of mankind falling in and with the stock, the case of *Adam's* posterity deserved commiseration, they being made obnoxious unto, and involved in everlasting misery, before they came to exist by themselves out of their seminal principles, or to enjoy the use of their reason and liberty.

§ 11. To this mean of salvation, which is placed without us, and hath no dependence upon us, that which answers on our part is *love* and *gratitude* to Jesus Christ, who became our surety to God; and *faith*, whereby we ascribe to him

him those hopes of salvation that he hath purchased for us, and rely on his merits and intercession for the pardon of our sins, the acceptance of our services with God, and the obtaining of every thing that is good for us.

§ 12. Because the *pardon* which Christ procured for fallen man is only *conditional*, and the *conditions* which God requires of us in order to our being restored to his favour (*viz.* That being unfeignedly penitent for our sins, we should return to God and our duty, restore unto him the full possession of our hearts, and both begin  
and

and ever continue to love him with all our soul) are such as they cannot directly, immediately, and at once be performed by us, because of the thick clouds of ignorance and the corrupt affections wherewith sin hath filled our minds; therefore some *means* must of necessity be prescribed and made use of for this end, by which, as by steps, we may gradually ascend to the perfect *love of God*, which is seated, as it were, upon the high throne of religion. Such means hath God prescribed in his word, and by so doing hath adopted them into the family of religion.

tion of our hearts, and both begin

§ 13. 'Tis clear and evident in itself, that in returning to the *love of God* we must take a course quite contrary to that by which man departed from it. Seeing then man lost this love of God, not by enjoying of nor taking his diversifement with the creatures (both which he might lawfully do) but by uniting his heart unto them by love; it follows, that if we would have this divine fire to descend upon the altar of our hearts, we must of necessity *extinguish* and put out the impure and muddy *love of the world*, and of the *creatures*: for the love of God and the love of the creatures cannot subsist together

gether in one and the same subject, but do mutually expell each other out of the heart of man; For if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him, as St. John affirmeth, 1 John ii. 15. because God requires that the heart of man be offered unto him whole and entire: *My son, (saith he) give me thy heart,* Prov. xxiii. 26. Nor can he allow a rival with him in man's love: as soon as man admits new and strange loves into his heart, God forsakes it as polluted, and defiled. But such is the good-will and mercy of God in Christ Jesus towards straying man, that no sooner is the heart  
of

of man offered unto him pure and void of the love of the creatures, but as soon he is willing to re-enter and dwell in it, and to fill it with divine light and joy. And to this mean of recovering the love of God do all those Precepts of religion belong, which forbid to *love, covet or seek after the world, its riches, honours, pleasures, or any created thing.*

§ 14. Again, as in order to the recovery of the *love of God*, the love of the creatures must be laid aside; so likewise, that man may be freed from this love of the creatures, it is needful that he abstain,

flain; as much as may be, from  
the converse and use of the creatures,  
those especially that are grateful  
and pleasing to the flesh: for be-  
sides that it appears unjust and un-  
reasonable, that rebels and trai-  
tors should presume to meddle  
with the divertisements that were  
provided for dutiful and obedient  
children; so unsteady and frail is  
human nature, since it was depra-  
ved by sin, that it cannot view nor  
enjoy those delights, without be-  
ing inveigled in their love. And  
therefore it behoveth us, in our  
food, cloathing, and other means  
of life, to rest contented with  
things necessary, and industrious-  
ly

ly to avoid such as be delightful

§ 15. That which makes this part of our duty the more easy, is the cursing of the earth, and the defacement of, at least, this sublunary world, which by the wise and just providence of God was the consequence of *Adam's* fall, by reason of which, the world, as it now is, differs as much from itself, as it was before the fall, as a vile dungeon does from a royal and magnificent palace. Concerning this corruption of the world the Apostle speaks, *Rom. viii. 20, 21 & 22.* where he says, *The creature was made subject to vanity,*

not willingly; and that at last the creature it self shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption. If men be passionately in love with this wretched carcass of a world, what would they have done, if they had seen and possessed it in its primitive perfection of splendor and beauty!

§ 16. Furthermore, because *self-love* is no less an enemy to the love of God, than is that of the other creatures, and does usually raise trophies to itself upon the other's ruins, it must of necessity be put off also. And to effectuate this, we must keep up a constant warfare

fare with our corrupt nature; whose *thoughts, counsels and desires*, are by the verdict of God himself, Gen. vi. 5. *only and continually evil.* Whatever it desires must be denied it, and the things for which it hath an aversion must be forced upon it. We must do nothing to gratify it; but its motions must still be resisted, to the end that it being brought into subjection, may never more obstruct or retard the operations of God's Spirit, renewing man in the heart. And because all these things are hard and grievous, and very unacceptable to our corrupt nature, we will never be thoroughly  
inclined

inclined to put them in practice,  
until the mind being duly affect-  
ed with a sorrowful sense of sin,  
and of its own misery, do first  
grope under the burden thereof,  
and aspire after deliverance from  
it. And these means which serve  
to extinguish *the love of the crea-*  
*tures in the hearts of men,* are the  
same which Christ and his Apo-  
stles do so frequently inculcate to  
us in the holy Scriptures, when  
they enjoin us *repentance, self-de-*  
*niel, renouncing the world, crucify-*  
*ing of the flesh, taking up of the*  
*cross, and putting off the old man.*  
§ 17. Moreover, as it is only  
the

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the gracious and immediate presence of the Deity, filling the soul with light and joy, that can beget them in the true love of God, which is the perfection of all religion; for the other means of salvation, that I have already named, do spring from a higher and far more noble principle than our nature. For seeing the human nature, as it is depraved by sin, is blind, and seeketh itself and its own advantage in all things, always and everywhere; and seeing the precepts of religion, of which we are speaking, are most displeasing and hateful unto it: it is evident that a compliance with them cannot be expected

expected without the assistance of *divine grace*; and that, both *internal*, which acteth upon the mind *immediately*, instructing, alluring, perswading and exciting it; and also *external*, which worketh by the *mediation* of the outward senses: So that it is not without ground that the Apostle says, *It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do*, Phil. ii. 3. For the obtaining of this mean, which is only in God's power, there is required on our part continual prayer, and a ready compliance with the inspirations of the Holy Ghost. *Ask, saith our Lord Christ, and ye shall receive*, Matth. vii. 7. and,

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Grieve

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*Grieve not the holy Spirit of God,*  
saith the Apostle, *Eph. iv. 30.*

§ 18. But inasmuch as the inward manifestations of the Holy Ghost do require a calm and composed mind; and the soft whispers, the sweet and gentle voice of the Holy Spirit, teaching and admonishing in the bottom of the heart, cannot be heard and observed by unregenerate men, because of the obstreperous noise and din of blustering and tumultuating passions and lusts: therefore it became necessary to call in the assistance of a *gross* and *corporeal* way of teaching, such as might make its way

to the mind through the external senses. For this reason God sent the *Prophets*, (to whom he had first manifested himself, partly by visions represented to their fancies, sometimes when they slept, and sometimes when they were awake, and partly by a voice, and outward signs) that they might warn and admonish other men, in his name, concerning those things that belonged to their salvation. And whereas, from *Adam's* fall downwards, mankind growing still worse, breaking out into diverse kinds of sins, and adding new crimes to their old vices, wandered still farther from God; it

became expedient, that God should warn them of their danger by new advertisements from time to time, and that he should multiply his precepts according to the diversity of the sins whereby men ignorantly and inconsiderately strayed from the way of salvation; until at length the wickedness of men being risen to an extraordinary height, and the revelations of the Prophets not being able to put a stop thereunto, the only begotten *Son of God*, in his great love to mankind, putting on our mortal nature, with all its infirmities, (yet without sin) vouchsafed to dwell among men, that he might perfectly

fectly instruct them in all that concerned their salvation; and in a frail and mortal body, like that which we bear about with us, might lead such a life as is necessarily to be led by All who shall be saved: that so, by a sensible experiment, he might convince us, that a Christian life is not impossible to our frailty, when fortified with the aids of divine grace; and finally, might lay down his life for expiating the sins of men.

§ 19. Also, the whole doctrine of religion, comprehending the discourses and deportment of Jesus Christ, together with the revelations

velations of the Prophets and the Apostles, is recorded in the Scriptures, as in publick registers; that by this means it might be far and near diffused throughout the world. The *Scriptures* therefore are necessary, that the precepts of religion, and the means of salvation, already named, might be made known unto men.

§ 20. But these are not yet all the expedients that God hath made use of, for rendring man's return to *his love*, and his way to salvation, the more plain and easy. Though all that which men are concerned to know and practise,

in order to their salvation, be so fully and plainly delivered in the Scriptures, that all, who are desirous to learn them, may, with a due application, easily there discover them: yet there be many who do not apply themselves to the reading of the Scriptures; many who, blinded with prejudice, are slow to understand that which they do read; others are remiss and negligent in performing what they do understand; and even they, who have begun to tread in the paths of life, do many times through inadvertency step aside, or by the violence of temptations are hurried away into the way of sin, and,

being once fallen into it, do sleep securely in it. To remedy which evils, these following expedients were provided. *Pastors* were appointed, whose office it is to instruct, admonish, reprove and console. *Religious Societies* of Christians, or *Churches*, were instituted, as useful for this end, that Christians might be helpful to one another, in promoting the common work of their salvation, by instructing the ignorant, reclaiming such as do err from the truth; raising up those that are cast down, quickning the lukewarm; rebuking those that commit sin, and avoiding such as be contumacious. *Religious*

*ligious Assemblies, also publick Wor-*  
*ship and Sacraments, were institu-*  
*ted; which though they do great-*  
*ly contribute to the promoting of*  
*Christians in faith and true holi-*  
*ness, do yet notwithstanding ma-*  
*nifestly suppose Pastors and Chri-*  
*stian Societies, and may be consi-*  
*dered by us as sanctions of those*  
*laws whereby Pastors and Church-*  
*es are authorised, to which we*  
*must give obedience, or be depriv-*  
*ed of the benefit of publick wor-*  
*ship, and of the comfort of the Sa-*  
*craments. And last of all, to the*  
*end that the publick affairs of e-*  
*very Church might be rightly ad-*  
*ministred, that is, that every thing*  
*might*

might be done decently and in order, and that communion might be kept up, and peace and concord maintain'd among the Churches, Church-Government was appointed.

§ 21. Thus have I, link by link, turned over *the whole chain of religion*, beginning at the highest degree thereof, viz. THE LOVE OF GOD, which alone is sought and enjoined for itself; descending from this to the *immediate means* whereby it is attained, and from them to such as be *more remote*, until at last we come to the *most remote* of all. This account, which

I have given of religion, furnishes us with a key, whereby any one, that is but indifferently vers'd in theological studies, may easily discover what place each part holds in the *system* of religion; how one part stands related to such other parts as are above, as a mean to the end; and to such as are below it, as the end to the means: and in what degree of necessity every part ought to be held. But, for the sake of beginners, I shall propose one or more of those things in this scheme, that deserve the greatest consideration.

§ 21. The first is, the remarkable

able difference between *charity*, or the *love of God*, and all the other parts of religion : among which it hath the pre-eminence, because it alone is desired for itself, and all the rest are instituted for its sake ; that, by their means and subserviency, mankind, which was fallen from the pure and chaste love of God ; into the strange and adulterous love of the creatures, may again be reduced to the love which they owe unto God. And thus charity is related to the other parts of religion, as the end is to the means ; agreeable to the Apostle's plain instruction, *The end of the commandment is charity*, Eph. iv.

11. Now, as the wooden frames and scaffolds, that are used in building, are taken away when the work is ended, they being then no longer useful; so when the love of God shall be perfected in the hearts of those that are to be saved, then Sacraments, Pastors, Churches, the holy Scriptures, the renouncing of the world, the mortifying of the flesh, repentance, faith, and all the other parts of religion that are distinct from charity, shall cease: as the same Apostle teacheth us, 1 Cor. xiii. 8. *Charity (saith he) never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues,*

B 7

*they*

### 30 Comparative Theology.

they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. Now abideth faith, hope, charity; but the greatest of these is charity.

§ 23. Another thing, that is to be diligently observed in this scheme, concerneth those parts of religion that are distinct from charity, their difference among themselves as they stand related to it as to their end. And in this respect they are classed in a three-fold difference. They are all means for recovering charity. But (1.) some of them are

are necessary, and withal sure and infallible : others (2.) are indeed necessary, but not sure and infallible : and others, (3.) finally, are neither sure and infallible, nor absolutely and indispensably necessary. In the first rank are, faith in Jesus Christ the Mediator; repentance, the mortifying of the corrupt nature, or the old man; the renouncing of the world with all its pomps and vanities ; and, finally, the weaning of the heart from the impure love of the world and all the creatures ; which being once rooted out, the love of God succeeds, and is kindled up and flied abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost.

All these be *indispensably necessary* for recovering the love of God, and they have a sure and infallible mediate or immediate connexion therewith. In the *second rank* stand *the holy Scriptures*; which, for reasons already expressed, are *simply necessary*, that men may attain to the knowledge of such things as it concerns them to know and practise, in order to their salvation. Which nevertheless is not to be understood, as if those, who were once well acquainted with the doctrine of religion delivered in the holy Scriptures, could not afterwards live a Christian life without those sacred books: For

as *Augustine* writes in his treatise  
of *Christian doctrine*, lib. 1. ch. 39.  
“ As a man grounded in faith,  
“ hope and charity, and retaining  
“ them stedfastly, needs not the  
“ Scriptures, except it be for the  
“ instruction of others; thus by  
“ these three many live in the de-  
“ part without books. Whence I  
“ think that in them is fulfilled  
“ that saying, *Whether there be*  
“ *prophecies, they shall fail; or*  
“ *tongues, they shall cease; or know-*  
“ *ledge, it shall be destroyed, &c.*”  
But though the Scriptures be ne-  
cessary in the degree I have men-  
tioned; yet are they not sure and  
infallible means of salvation: see-

ing very many of those who have them, and read them daily, come short of it; not for any fault in the Scriptures, but in the persons themselves, who take no care to order their lives and manners according to the precepts in them delivered.

§ 24. In the *third rank* of means of salvation, which are neither necessary nor sure and infallible, are included *Pastors*, religious societies or Churches, *Sacraments*, public Worship, *Ecclesiastical Polity* or Church-discipline, and if there be any other instituted by God for this end, that men may be excited

to learn, or keep in mind, or practise the duties of religion, that are fully and clearly delivered in the Scriptures. That these have no sure and infallible connexion with the salvation of men, is more evident than to want either proof or illustration. And although Christians ought not to neglect or despise, but to make use of them when they can be had, as well because they are prescribed by God, as that in the right use of them many excellent advantages may be reaped; yet this will not make them absolutely and indispensably necessary to salvation: For it is certain, that such as have

the Scriptures, if they carefully and diligently peruse them, may both discover the way of salvation marked out in them; and having found it, may begin to walk in it; and, by the assistance of God's grace, may constantly persevere therein, until at last they work out their salvation: although they live in such a corner of the world, where they have no opportunities, either of Preachers, whom they may hear; or of Churches, to which they may join themselves; or (by consequence) of Sacraments, of which they may partake. Of this we have notable instances in some of the Hermites,

parti-

particularly in *Paul*, the first of them; who having passed his whole time, from his blooming youth to an extreme old age, in a remote desert, without the company or society of any man, except *Anthony* alone, with whom he conversed for a short time, and that not long before his death, hath deservedly obtained a great reputation for piety in the Church of Christ.

SECT.

## [ S E C T. III

*Wherein several material propositions and useful corollaries are introduced from the preceeding descriptions of this Theology. How to discern betwixt the fundamental principles of religion, and such as are not fundamental; and betwixt damnable, dangerous, and harmless errors.]*

§ 25. **H**AVING laid down the general idea of this Theology, together with the more distinct and particular explication thereof, I come now to the many and weighty propositions, and rules, and conclusions which may  
be

be deduced from this doctrine. And indeed so various and manifold is the use of this *Comparative Theology* (which I have already explained) both in a private life, and also for the right ordering of the Church; it abounds with so many useful rules and instructions for every kind of life, that it would be hard to reckon up all that might be deduced from it by serious and attentive meditation. I shall instance only in a few for a trial.

§ 26. First then, by this doctrine of *Comparative Theology*, it plainly appears, that the precepts of the *Christian religion* have proceeded  
neither

neither from the mere *arbitrary* will of God, nor from his *wrath* and *displeasure*; but from *love*, *favour* and *good-will* toward fallen man. And the reason why God hath imposed the hard laws of *repentance*, *self-denial*, and the *renouncing of the world*, as necessary to be observed by all that would be saved, is not, that he might exercise his authority over men, or be avenged on them; but because there is no other safe and secure way of raising them to a true and lasting happiness, besides that which the precepts of religion do prescribe. God might indeed, by virtue of his omnipotence, have  
restored

restored man, who was fallen into  
 to sin and misery, unto his origi-  
 nal holy and happy state, with-  
 out the intervention of a *medicinal*  
*penitence*. But recent experiences,  
 and the notable instance of insta-  
 bility and inconstancy which *Ad-*  
*am* had given, do evidently dis-  
 cover that nothing was to be ex-  
 pected this way; but that *Adam*,  
 having lightly escaped so great a  
 danger, would have been the more  
 presumptuous to offend again; or,  
 if his experience had made him  
 more cautious and wary, yet his  
 children would readily have elap-  
 sed into his sin and misery. So  
 that if this method had been tar-  
 geted

ken for recovering fallen man, it is probable that *Adam* only would have been saved by it. For this reason it was more agreeable, both to the wisdom and goodness of God, to grant unto fallen man regress and return unto his first state of happiness by the way of *penitence* only; which, though it be the more difficult, yet it is the most safe and infallible. For as those who come to great fortunes, either by succession to their parents, or by the bounty of their Prince, are more probably inclined to squander away their wealth, than others, who have acquired riches by their own industry and labour,

labour, after they have felt the pinching difficulties of want and poverty; so it is not to be doubted, but those men who have with difficulty wrestled out of the deep gulf of sin and misery, and have come to happiness by the rough, uneasy and narrow way of penitence, will prove far more constant in the love of their Creator, and more firm and resolute in sustaining and repelling the assaults of temptations, than was either *Adam*, who was created in a state of felicity, or than his posterity would have been, in case that happiness had been by succession transmitted unto them from *Adam*:

§ 27. If it shall here be enquired, Might not God have restored man immediately after his fall; and, having restored, confirmed him also in grace and holiness, and put him out of all danger of falling again any more, so as he should not have been afterward obnoxious unto sin, no more than the glorious angels? I answer, That a *confirmed state of grace and holiness* is both the fruit and reward of a previous and tried constancy and firmness in the love of God: That it was granted upon no other conditions to the angels, who persisted in their duty and fidelity; nor would have been  
given

given unto *Adam*, suppose he had not sinned, till after a competent time of trial faithfully spent in the love of God: finally, That it is not possible that a reasonable creature can attain to a consummated state of perfection by any other way, without infringing its liberty, which God will have preserved safe and inviolate.

[§. For such is the *nature of liberty*, that without hurt and prejudice to itself, it cannot allow, that any of the faculties that are under its conduct, especially the will, should be determined by any other principle than itself, in their applica-

application to this rather than the other suitable object, after this rather than the other manner. Nevertheless it will suffer itself to be fixed and bound, either to good or evil, by cords of its own making. Such are the *habits* contracted by long and continued exercises of the acts of love, desire, complacency, enjoyment, and the like, upon the same objects: whereby a man finds himself pushed forward to the love, desire and enjoyment of those objects; and drawn back when he offers to separate and withdraw his affections from them; so that, without difficulty and violence done to himself,

self, he cannot abstain from the acts unto which such habits do dispose him, no more than exercise the contrary : which hath given the rise to that vulgar maxim, *Custom is a second nature.*

§. This is plain and undeniable in the case of *evil habits*, that are so common and ordinary. For who knows not that a *glutton*, a *drunkard*, or a *lascivious person*, for example, are so enslaved to those  *vicious habits and lusts* which they serve, that they cannot, without great difficulty and much struggling, refrain from *satiating* their sensual *desires and appetites*, when they

they have it in their power; not  
 be reclaimed from their dissolute  
 conversation, to a sober, a tem-  
 perate and a chaste conversation?  
 This the Prophet *Jeremy* doth si-  
 gnificantly express, when he saith,  
*Can the Ethiopian change his colour,*  
*or the leopard his spots?* then may  
 ye also do good, who are accustomed  
 to do evil, Jer. xiii. 23.

§. Not is there less force and  
 efficacy in good habits, which are  
 contracted by a long course of  
 good actions, performed by the  
 power of the Holy Ghost, where-  
 by the old man is subdued and  
 mortified, the new quickned and

advanced by degrees, till in the end he become a perfect man. For when any person is once come this length, he becomes ready, forward and inclined to good; slow, backward and averse to evil: as St. John instructs us, *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for the seed of God abideth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God, 1 John iii. 9.* To this the experience also of the regenerate, who declare that they find it so, doth perfectly agree.

§. After that these good or evil habits have received their proper and suitable improvements from God,

God, that is, after he has fortified and established the good by renewed measures and communications of his grace, and has plied the evil with repeated endeavours, and all to no purpose, to reclaim them; when he resolves, that the graces of his Spirit shall not be any more prostituted to the scorn and contempt of those who are rooted in sin; and when he rewards the godly, for the good use that they have made of their liberty, with plentiful measures of grace, and takes the government of their free will (after they have freely resigned it) into his own hands: then follows the final, unchangeable

able and endless obduration of the wicked in sin, and the establishment of the godly in grace and holiness. Whence it appears, that rational free creatures can neither be established in a state of grace, nor hardened into a state of sin, without infringing their liberty, except the free use and exercise thereof in good or evil (which in good at least must be habitual) have gone before it.]

§ 28. Secondly, This doctrine of *Comparative Theology* discovers the ground of that which the Apostle delivers 1 Cor. xiii. where he declares, that those parts of religion

ligion which are commonly most esteemed, (such are, much knowledge in divine things, orthodoxy, faith, and suffering of persecution for the true religion, even unto death) will be unprofitable to salvation without *charity*: because these, and all other things pertaining to religion, are for this end ordained and enjoined by God, that by them men may be brought to *charity*, or the love of God; so that if they do not attain to that end, they become vain and unprofitable. Wherefore they are far deceived, who conceive good hopes, and entertain a good opinion of themselves, and of their own spiritual

usual condition; because they do belong to this or the other party of Christians, because they are diligent and assiduous in hearing, reading, praying and communicating; all these being too weak supporters whereupon to build a solid hope of salvation. For unless men will denounce war against their corrupt nature, renounce the world, and deny themselves, they shall never recover the *true and sincere love of God*; and, without the *unfeigned love of God*, they shall never come to his presence, nor to the dwelling-place of the blessed.

§ 29. Thirdly, This Theology

C

teach-

teacheth us, how to distinguish  
 between the *essential* or *fundamen-  
 tal principles* of religion, and those  
 that are *not fundamental*. And  
 here I take the essence of religion  
 not strictly, for all that which be-  
 longeth to religion, always, and in  
 all states, (in which sense the *Love  
 of God* alone makes up the whole  
 essence of religion;) but more  
 largely, for all those things which  
 are necessary for men, considered  
 in a state of corrupt nature, that  
 they may be fitted for and brought  
 into the enjoyment of eternal hap-  
 piness. Now, whereas some parts  
 of religion are means of salvation,  
 both necessary, and sure or infal-  
 lible;

libles, others necessary, but not  
 sure; and others are indeed means  
 of salvation, but neither sure nor  
 necessary: it is evident that the  
 precepts and institutions of the  
 third class do by no means belong  
 to the tribe of the fundamentals  
 of religion. Moreover, because  
 a *fundamental* of religion, properly  
 so called, is that, the knowledge  
 whereof is necessary to *salvation*,  
 directly, and of itself; and all the  
 precepts and institutions of the first  
 class, and they only, are such:  
 from this it does appear, that the  
 whole family of the *fundamentals*  
 of religion is contained within the  
 limits of the first class. But be-  
 cause

cause men can by no other means  
 come to the certain knowledge of  
 the fundamentals of religion, than  
 by the *Scriptures*; therefore, to  
 know the *Scriptures*, and to ac-  
 knowledge them for a sure and in-  
 fallible rule of faith, may be cal-  
 led a *secondary fundamental prin-*  
*ciple of religion.*

§ 30. Fourthly, This Theology  
 teacheth also the difference of er-  
 rors; that some are *dannable* and  
*pernicious*, some *dangerous* only,  
 and some *harmless*. All those er-  
 rors, touching faith and religion,  
 which do necessarily subvert some  
*fundamental principle of religion,*  
 and

and that in the opinion and judgment of the erring person; or that cannot subsist at the same time, and in the same mind with the belief of the fundamental principles of religion: these, and these only, are to be look'd upon as *destructive and damnable*; and, as such, are with great care and diligence to be expelled out of the confines of the Church. For the Christian religion is like a bridge, by which alone men can go from this valley of miseries to the blessed regions of light and peace; and the *fundamental principles* of religion are as so many arches, which, joined and united together, do make

up this bridge: and therefore those errors that do overturn any of the fundamental principles of religion, do, as it were, cut out an arch from the bridge; whereby a breach is made in it, and the passage by it unto heaven is thus cut off and obstructed.

§ 31. Again, those errors are to be avoided; as dangerous, whose tendency is to make men remiss and negligent in the business of their salvation. Of this kind is that error ascribed to Origen, concerning the punishment of the devils and damned. That, after a long course of time, they shall come to

an end; and that the damned  
 themselves shall at last be transla-  
 ted into the habitations of the bles-  
 sed. By which doctrine it is e-  
 vident, that the fear of hell, and  
 the force thereof to restrain men  
 from sin, is in great measure weak-  
 ned and infringed. Finally, those  
 errors may be tolerated, as *harm-  
 less*, whereby a Christian, who is  
 in the way of salvation, is neither  
 let nor retarded in his course. Such  
 was the error of St. Cyprian, con-  
 cerning the rebaptization of here-  
 tics; and another of Irenaeus,  
 who writes, that our Saviour was  
 fifty years old when he suffered.

§ 32. From hence, in the fifth place, we may draw *rules and principles*, for directing not only private Christians, how far they may entertain or refuse *external communion* with the different, yea adverse sects and societies of Christians, into which the unity of the Christian Church is miserably divided and rent asunder; but Church-Governors also, in the making and abrogating Ecclesiastical laws. For whereas the end and design of those Christian societies, which we call Churches, is, that by their help every private Christian may be forwarded in a course of piety, and assisted in working out their salvation;

ration; it is plain, *First*, That a  
 Christian, who lays the work of  
 his salvation to heart, ought (if his  
 circumstances will permit him) to  
 join himself unto, and associate  
 with those Churches, wherein the  
 best helps to piety are to be found.  
*Next*, That he must abstain from  
 the communion of those Churches,  
 whose fellowship is apt to hinder  
 or retard his progress in true pie-  
 ty; either because the purity of the  
 Christian doctrine is therein cor-  
 rupted with evil principles; and  
 such as flatter corrupt nature; or  
 because the force and efficacy of  
 sound and wholesome doctrine is  
 impaired and enervated by the mis-

chievous examples of a worldly life; or, finally, because the privilege of communion is annexed to something that is unlawful, as a necessary condition thereof. Thirdly, That the communion of that Church, whereof he is a member already, and whose fellowship, though it be little useful to piety, yet is not prejudicial to it, should be continued in, in case it cannot be forsaken without some great inconvenience.

§ 33. For the same reason also it becomes the duty of all those who are promoted to the government of Churches, to make use of their

their power and authority for edification, and not for destruction; not enjoining any thing that is not conducive to Christians their advancement in true piety, nor requiring any thing, as a necessary condition of external communion, which any sober person in his right mind, and who is acted by a serious and sincere desire after holiness, cannot perform with a good conscience, lest they chance to debar from the external communion of their Church those whom Christ hath honoured with inward and spiritual communion with himself and with the saints, that is, with the invisible Church; and, finally,

ly, constraining no persons against their mind and conscience to an external communion with any Church.

[§. In this corollary we may behold, as in a glass, *the deplorable state of the Christian world* at this day, wherein almost every sect of Christians, at least the ruling part among them, do require the belief and profession of their peculiar and distinguishing doctrines (which are some of them obscure, others doubtful and uncertain, and others false) as a necessary condition of communion; sowing by this means the seeds of *discord*, and *division*, and *barred* among Christians,

stians, instead of that *UNITY*, and *LOVE*, and *GONCORD*, which our Saviour so earnestly recommended to his disciples. Nor is this all; but they do what in them lies to force all others, by mulcts, banishments, and corporal punishments, to embrace their communion, and to fulfil the conditions thereof: and by so doing, instead of making men Christians, they only make them hypocrites; of all sinners the most hateful in the sight of God.]

§ 34. Last of all, From this scheme of *Comparative Theology* does plainly appear, that Church-

govern-

government is such a mean of recovering the love of God as is neither necessary, nor sure and infallible; and consequently, that it is not a *fundamental principle*, nor an essential member of the Christian religion; and that in the body thereof it holds the place, not of the heart or other vitals, but of the more extreme parts. This is a matter that ought to be well considered by all Christians, but especially by those among whom bitter envyings, and strifes, and contentions are kept up, discord and tumults are raised, animosities and hatred are exercised about particular forms of Church government

~~most~~ ~~and~~ discipline, to the great  
 reproach of Christianity, the scan-  
 dal of the weak, and the woful  
 decay, or (shall I say?) the utter  
 ruin and subversion of true piety.  
 How much better were it, and  
 more conducive to the honour of  
 the Christian religion, to piety and  
 to peace, that Christians should ra-  
 ther exercise a mutual forbearance  
 in this case, by allowing every one  
 free liberty to think, and speak,  
 and act as they please, in these  
 and other such like matters, that  
 are remote from the center of re-  
 ligion, concerning which sincere  
 lovers of truth and holiness may  
 differ in their judgments, and that

without any prejudice to mutual  
love and the duties of charity, ei-  
ther among single persons, or a-  
mong the societies of Christians  
and Churches.

From all that has been said;  
the notable use and neces-  
sity of this Comparative Theology  
abundantly appears. For he  
who does not understand the va-  
riations and differing respects and re-  
lations of the several parts of re-  
ligion among themselves (which  
this Theology teaches) cannot but  
often

# IN THE CONCLUSION

Wherein the use of this Theology is more particularly declared. The inconvenience to which they are exposed, who are not acquainted with it. The character of one who follows its direction. The epilogue.

§. FROM all that has been said, the notable use and necessity of this *Comparative Theology* does abundantly appear. For he who does not understand the various and differing respects and relations of the several parts of religion among themselves (which this Theology teaches) cannot but

often stumble and fall, and wander in his way to eternal life. For either, *First*, He will consider all the parts of religion as equal, and standing upon the same level; and so will apply himself to them indifferently, without order or choice, practising now one duty, then another, as his inclinations or circumstances shall prompt him: not unlike to an unskilful husbandman, that should take much pains in sowing, digging, tilling, harrowing, &c. his ground, without any regard to the order or season that ought to be observed there-

in answer For as this man would unavoidably fall short of the hope'd for reward of his labours, I mean, of a plentiful harvest; so the other would infallibly lose the fruit and reward of a religious conversation, viz. regeneration and eternal life. Now, I make no doubt but there are many such to be found among the professors of Christianity; who considering only what is common to all the parts and precepts of their religion, viz. the stamp of divine authority, and not adverting to the proper and peculiar aims of every one of them in particular, do keep a mighty stir, and are much taken up about religion.

gion to little purpose, without making any considerable progress in it: like the men of Sodom, who, being smitten with blindness, wearied themselves in vain to find the door of Lot's house; and seem to be pointed out by the Apostle, under the figure of silly women, who are ever learning, and never able to come to the (saving and practical) knowledge of the truth. Or,

J. Secondly, He will prefer the lesser and lighter matters of religion to such as be greater and more weighty; with which our Saviour upbraids the Scribes and Pharisees, who paid tithes of mint, cummin  
and

and arise; but neglected the weightier things of the law, judgment, mercy and truth: A fault whereof the greater part of Christians are guilty, who put a greater value upon a right belief and persuasion touching things less necessary, (such as are almost all the distinguishing doctrines of every sect of Christians, together with some religious rites, and particular rules and forms of Church discipline and government, much controverted in these times; concerning which a man may think and act thus or otherwise, provided he act not against his conscience, without prejudice to his salvation) than they do

do upon holiness of heart and life, without which no man shall see God, Heb. xii. 13. being less solicitous for this than the other. For as in their own practice they study more to be orthodox, than to be humble, charitable, mortified to the world, and self-denied; so they do with open arms receive into their communion all that do agree with them in doctrine and worship, be their lives never so sensual and worldly; but do exclude, as aliens and strangers, all such as differ from them in these matters, be their lives otherwise never so harmless and holy; seeking rather to gain disciples and followers to their

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their own way and party, than to  
 Christ and his religion: who, if  
 with the profelytes of the scribes  
 and Pharisees they grow not worse,  
 yet will certainly get little more  
 by their change, than an exchange  
 of opinions, and of the modes and  
 circumstances of external worship.  
 They do also split upon this  
 same rock, who, neglecting the  
 capital virtues of the Christian re-  
 ligion, take up their rest in the  
 means subservient thereunto, such  
 as are the Scriptures, Sermons, Sa-  
 craments, and the like; whose use  
 is, to instruct men in the essential  
 duties of Religion, to stir them up  
 to,

to, and assist them in, the performance of them. In which we may observe many to be much employed; who do think, that in so doing they have reasonably well discharged their duty as Christians, though they never aspire after *humility, the mortification of the flesh, the renouncing of the world, and the love of God, and their neighbour;* for the sake of which, all those other things, wherewith they are so much taken up, were purely intended and appointed: not a whit wiser than one, who, intending a journey to some remote country or city, should employ all his time and care in providing and  
view-

viewing of horses, chariots, servants, provisions, and other necessities for a journey; and in the mean time never stir a foot from home, to set forward on the journey. Or,

§. They will slight and neglect the inferior ministring and subservient parts and duties of religion, and seek to come at those of the highest rank and degree without them: with no better success, than if a man should endeavour to get up to the top of a high tower without the help of the stairs that lead to it, by throwing out his arms, straining his body, and standing  
ing

ing on tip-toe. And this fault is but too common among Christians, who imagine they can attain to *internal virtues* of contrition, humility, contempt of the world, self-denial, the love of God, &c. by meditation and thinking only, without practising the external good works that dispose and lead thereunto, and without avoiding the allurements and temptations to the contrary vices: such as be riches, honours, pleasures, and the familiarity and friendship of worldly-minded men: acting in this with as little colour of reason, as one, who being shut up in a dark prison, or plunged in snow up to the chin,

him, should expect to be enlight-  
ned and warmed by the mere force  
of his imagination, without com-  
ing forth into the bright and  
warm sun.

To these we may add some o-  
thers, who boast of inward mani-  
festations of the Spirit, communi-  
on with God, spiritual joys, and  
such like rewards and comforts of  
a pure heart; although they have  
not as yet purged out the old lea-  
ven of carnal lusts and earthly af-  
fections: embracing the shadow  
for the substance.

¶ On the contrary, he who is  
acquainted with the doctrine of  
this

this pure and peaceable *Theology*, and will chuse to follow its directions, he considers *charity*, or the love of God, as the great end, and the other duties and vertues belonging to the Christian religion, as the means appointed for attaining thereunto: and accordingly he makes the first his great aim and business, and the rest he regardeth and useth only in consideration of their subserviency to this first. He reads the Scriptures, meditates, hears Sermons, receives the Sacraments, and performs other subservient duties of religion, not that he may rest in them, but that by their means he may be  
wgd stirred

stirred up and helped forward to  
 the contempt of himself and the  
 world, and to the love of God,  
 and of his neighbour for God's  
 sake; knowing that all the labour  
 that is laid out that way is lost,  
 if it do not contribute to this end.  
 And as though eating and drink-  
 ing are the necessary means of life  
 and health, and yet men must not  
 be always eating and drinking,  
 but must allow some time for di-  
 gestion; so he observes a medio-  
 crity in reading the Scriptures,  
 hearing Sermons, &c. avoiding  
 excess therein, as hurtful.  
 §. There is no help to piety,  
 how

how mean and contemptible they ever it may appear, which he either contemns in his own practice, or condemns in another's: yet he is not so much wedded to any external means of salvation, which are not necessary, but that he can lay them aside, in case that through long use, or rather abuse, they are become unprofitable or hurtful; as was the brazen serpent. He is neither so fond nor so afraid of any religious rite or ceremony, or ecclesiastical custom, that is innocent, and being indifferent in itself, may be used for a good end, but he can either use or abstain from it, as the peace of the Church;

or the edification of his neighbour  
 does require: herein imitating the  
 Apostle, who to the Jews, became as  
 a Jew, that he might gain the Jews;  
 to them that were under the law, as  
 under the law, that he might gain  
 them that were under the law; to  
 them that were without law, as  
 without law, that he might gain  
 them that were without law. To  
 the weak he became as weak, that  
 he might gain the weak. Finally,  
 he was made all things unto all men,  
 that he might by all means save some;  
 1 Cor. ix. 20, &c. gained his  
 The necessary fundamental  
 truths of religion he finds to be  
 but

but few; to which he firmly adheres, and lays them up carefully in his heart: but is less taken up with the rest; concerning which he loves not to debate with any person; well knowing, that as few controversies ever ended this way, so the minds of men are thereby diverted from the study of holiness, and hatred, animosities, divisions and persecutions are begotten and fomented; and that a further progress and advancement in the saving knowledge of the truth is better attained by holy living, than by much disputing. He maintains an inward spiritual communion of love and affection  
with

with all that truly fear God, and  
sincerely seek him, however much  
they may differ from him, and  
among themselves, concerning the  
matters of religion that are less  
necessary; being ready to enter-  
tain external communion with  
them, so far as the terms and  
conditions of external communion  
which they require will allow,  
and so far as they do not obstruct  
the love of God, and the morti-  
fying of our corrupt nature: but  
carefully avoids the company and  
familiarity of all wicked and  
worldly-minded men, as hurtful  
and contagious, although they a-  
gree with him in the profession of  
the

the same doctrine and outward worship.]

§ 35. These inferences ought to have been treated with more accuracy, and at greater length; but the shortness of the time allotted for this exercise hath obliged me to abridge them, and silently to pass over others of some consequence. Besides, I am afraid my hearers may already be weary of this discourse, which the great variety of matter, that of necessity must be crowded into its narrow bounds, hath rendred more profitable than pleasant; and therefore I shall here put a stop to it :

Heartily recommending the heads of it to you, *My dear Fellow-students*, to be further digested, amplified and enlarged by you, in your more retired thoughts and private meditations; and to the Father of lights, to be by him plentifully watered with the blessing of heaven.

To the all-good, all-wise and almighty Lord our God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be praise and glory for ever. AMEN.

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 Comparison of the  
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 mighty Father God, Father, Son,  
 and Holy Spirit, be praise and glory  
 for ever. Amen.



